

Climbing the water ladder: Multiple-Use water Services for poverty reduction



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Water users whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and small enterprise, need water for multiple purposes at their various usage sites, including homesteads. Yet, when communities reach out for external support to improve their access to water for diverse needs, they are stonewalled by the administrative focus on a single use of water – whether for domestic use, crops, fish, trees or livestock. *Climbing the Water Ladder* shows how the current dichotomy between ‘domestic’ and ‘productive’ water and technologies have hindered the full developmental potential of water from being unleashed.

How can we leverage water use to improve health, food security, income and freedom from the drudgery of fetching water, while co-opting for professional expertise in hygiene and sanitation education, agricultural extension services, market linkages, etc, to enhance livelihood benefits?

The authors try to answer this question in *Climbing the Water Ladder*, and come up with some significant and appealing answers and observations. The book is an output from the pioneering multiple-use water services (MUS) project – a five-year, eight-country, action research project led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in collaboration with the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, International Development Enterprise (IDE) and 150 national partners. The project was supported by the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and carried out in five of its benchmark basins.

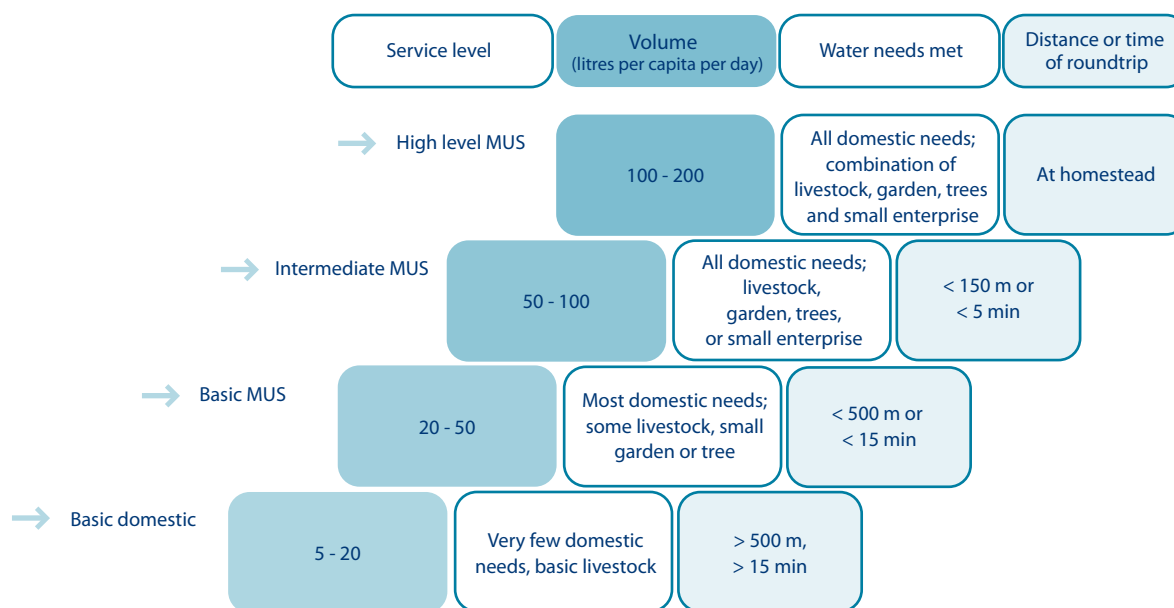
Several thought-provoking insights emerged from the work. For example, systems designed for single use are in reality used for many non-planned purposes. This unplanned usage could damage the infrastructure and disturb water allocation. Planning for multiple uses not only prevents these negative impacts, but also opens up a number of new opportunities to provide better water services with stronger livelihood benefits. In this book, the authors focus on two scale-based models of MUS and suggest how stakeholder groups can innovate scaling up of MUS.



The homestead-scale MUS seeks to meet men's and especially women's multiple water needs for domestic uses in dwelling units and for small-scale enterprises on the adjoining lands or 'homesteads'. Wherever people have reliable access to water sufficiently near homesteads, they use it for domestic and productive uses. These uses contribute directly and indirectly to all important dimensions of well-being as stipulated under the Millennium Development Goals.

A field-tested multiple-use water ladder is proposed to reflect the reality of people's concurrent domestic and increasing productive uses at various service levels. This can guide policy on service levels more realistically than the ladder that is commonly used in the domestic sub-sector.

The multiple-use water ladder



Under the community MUS, all water resources, infrastructure and usage sites are dovetailed towards meeting multiple water needs, with explicit attention to the marginalized. Costs are reduced by integrating existing infrastructure and water management arrangements towards incremental improvement. Economies of scale are achieved for shared intake, storage and conveyance.



Scaling up through stakeholder groups

In the MUS project multi-stakeholder learning alliances promoted the uptake of both the MUS models among intermediate, national and international level service providers. For water users, users associations and local private providers, the benefits of multiple water uses from multiple sources are obvious. NGOs would find MUS as a natural tool for furthering their agenda of livelihood improvement.

For the domestic sub-sector, homestead-scale MUS is often a de facto achievement – leading to livelihood improvement. Moving up to community-scale, MUS allows better integration with the development and management of multiple sources for multiple sites and uses.

For the productive sub-sectors, homestead-scale MUS would open up new opportunities for better targeting of the poor, empowering women, and assisting the sick and the vulnerable. At community-scale, the productive sub-sectors are already addressing multiple uses of open water infrastructure and storage, whether planned or not.

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